

CROP NOTES for May 28, 2009 – PEAQ Update

Past issues of Crop Notes are posted at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/winneshiek/info/crops.htm>

Iowa State University Extension Information for Northeast Iowa

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PEAQ

May 28 Report - Timing First-Crop Alfalfa

Predictive Equations for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) is a method used to estimate forage quality of a standing alfalfa crop. The field estimation is based on the height of the tallest stem and the maturity stage of the field. It has worked very well as a “ball-park” indicator to estimate harvest time for first-crop alfalfa. The following Fact Sheet explains the PEAQ procedure, and can be used to estimate timeliness of first-crop harvest of your own fields.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/11CD336E-1D82-427F-9922-49A4C48230AF/12306/FactSheetBL22.pdf>

On average alfalfa quality will drop 3 to 5 points in RFV per day in spring. It is recommended to produce alfalfa forage around 150 RFV for milking dairy herds, and 120 to 130 RFV for heifers, stocker cattle and lactating beef cattle. Under typical hay harvest conditions, 15% of the forage dry matter will be lost. Therefore, it is suggested to cut at PEAQ readings of 165 to 170 RFV (bud stage alfalfa about 27-inches tall) to end up with harvested forage of approximately 150 RFV.

A random sampling of fields across northeast Iowa are being checked for PEAQ twice a week (Monday & Thursday).

PEAQ Results for Thursday May 28:

County, Height (inches), Stage of maturity, RFV

Butler, 31, Bud, 152

Clayton, Harvested

Delaware, Harvested

Dubuque, Harvested

Floyd, 29, Bud, 160

Howard, 20, Bud, 201

Winneshiek, 29, Bud, 160

1) All fields should be in “Bud” stage. Bud stage plus 27-inch ht. is roughly 168 RFV standing crop, and becomes roughly ~155 RFV harvested crop.

- 2) Winter-Injured Stands. Those fields affected more so by the winter are further behind (height and stage) and are also weaker stands. They should be allowed to develop to a more mature stage (develop some blooms) to store more root carbohydrates to regain normal vigor.
- 3) Beef quality hay usually is not harvested until bloom stage.

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